

From: Symmes, Brian
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Governor Nikki Haley News:

The State: SC senator proposes eliminating state's individual income tax

<http://www.thestate.com/2013/12/17/3164749/senator-proposes-eliminating-states.html>

Adam Beam

State Sen. Katrina Shealy wants to eliminate the state's individual income tax, and she has Republican Gov. Nikki Haley's blessing. The Lexington County Republican filed a bill Tuesday that would abolish the state's individual income tax over the next five years. If the bill becomes law, South Carolina would join seven other states – including Texas and Florida – that do not have state income taxes.

Note: Haley, a first-term governor who is seeking re-election next year, previously has endorsed smaller income tax cuts and proposed eliminating the state's smaller corporate income tax. Tuesday, her spokesman said she supports Shealy's bill.

Note: "As we have seen firsthand, when you create a stronger business environment, more people get jobs – and eliminating the income tax in South Carolina will carry us to a whole new competitive field," Doug Mayer said.

Huffington Post: Nikki Haley May Have Violated Occupy Protesters' Free Speech Rights, Court Finds

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/17/nikki-haley-occupy-protesters_n_4462066.html

Matt Sledge

A group of Occupy protesters suing South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley (R) over their ejection from the State House grounds have a "viable" claim that she violated their First Amendment rights, a federal appeals court ruled on Monday. Nineteen Occupy Columbia protesters were camped out on November 16, 2011 when Haley had them arrested on two hours notice. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals found Monday that their arrest may have been unconstitutional, because they were arrested without a formal rule change banning sleeping, and so their lawsuit can continue.

Note: "There are still several steps to go in order to resolve this matter in the courts," Haley's spokesman Doug Mayer told the newspaper the State. "We continue to stand behind the decision made two years ago -- and which is still the rule today -- that the State House grounds are not meant to be used as a public toilet or campground."

S.C. Political News:

Rock Hill Herald: S.C. Rep. Norman considering run for lieutenant governor

<http://www.heraldonline.com/2013/12/17/5513859/sc-rep-norman-considering-run.html#storylink=cpy>

Jie Jenny Zou

State Rep. Ralph Norman, R-Rock Hill, is considering a run for lieutenant governor after incumbent Glenn McConnell recently set his sights on an education position in Charleston. Norman, who represents District 48 in York County, said he is "strong, strongly" considering the position after McConnell began eying the president's office at the College of Charleston. McConnell has not formally announced his intentions, however. Of McConnell, Norman said, "I got worried he was not going to run," adding that he thinks McConnell has done a great job.

Aiken Standard: Rep. Smith won't announce re-election decision until January

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131218/AIK0101/131219480/1004/rep-smith-wont-announce-re-election-decision-until-january>

Derrek Asberry

One of Aiken's state representatives has decided on whether he will run for re-election next year, but won't announce his decision until next month. S.C. Rep. Roland Smith, R-Aiken, said he is withholding his announcement until Monday, Jan. 13 – the date of the Aiken County Legislative Delegation meeting. The

meeting will begin at 5 p.m., and Smith said he will make a brief announcement on his decision. When asked why he is waiting until the meeting, Smith told the Aiken Standard that it is an issue of fairness.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Times and Democrat: S.C. looking like land of opportunity for college grads

http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/editorial/s-c-looking-like-land-of-opportunity-for-college-grads/article_6c2c4f3c-67a3-11e3-81a1-0019bb2963f4.html

Editorial

THE ISSUE: College graduates and jobs; OUR OPINION; Young people can increasingly look at South Carolina as place for careers; Once upon a time, South Carolina lamented that its young people did not have ample opportunities to keep them in the Palmetto State for careers. That has changed and is continuing to change as the state is capturing jobs in all aspects of the economy, from high tech to manufacturing, including even the seemingly forgotten textile industry. Monday was a notable day.

Greenville News: State was right to advance STEM

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312180004&gcheck=1>

Editorial

In 2007 South Carolina made a change that increased the value of the state's LIFE and Palmetto Fellows scholarships for students who majored in math and science to encourage an increase in the number of graduates seeking training in these ever-more important and lucrative fields. The goal was to create an even more prepared workforce for the coming knowledge economy and to attract more high-technology employers to the state, thereby spurring economic growth.

The State: What We Could All Learn From Clemson President Jim Barker

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=JnJgYjtF

Cindi Scoppe

Jim Barker is adamant that he won't give his successor any advice unless or until asked. It's part of the delicate balance he's trying to strike as he becomes Clemson's first former president to remain on campus as a professor. But after 14 years as president - a period that saw a dramatic rise in the university's national stature, including being ranked among the top 25 public universities by U.S. News & World Report for six consecutive years now - he is not at all hesitant to dole out advice to the Legislature, the state's higher education community and the people of South Carolina.

S.C. Federal Delegation News:

Aiken Standard: State senators say 'no' to proposed federal budget

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131218/AIK0101/131219442/1007/AIK0101/state-senators-say-no-to-proposed-federal-budget>

Derrek Asberry

Both of South Carolina's senators voted on Tuesday not to approve the proposed federal budget. The budget is the next step in securing funding for the Savannah River Site. In route to the Senate approving the budget, U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Tim Scott, R-S.C., voted against it. The two joined 31 other senators who voted against the budget. Sixty-seven senators voted yes, which is more than the 60 votes required to move towards a final passage that only requires 51 votes.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: House Ethics panel considers Rep. Mitchell's case

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=19Tu58Tj

A state House committee that is looking into possible ethics violations by Rep. Harold Mitchell made no ruling Tuesday after meeting for several hours behind closed doors. The House Ethics Committee is weighing allegations that Mitchell illegally withdrew cash from a campaign account, did not have required receipts, did not report donations, paid for non-campaign items, and misreported a loan payment. Last month, the Spartanburg Democrat told his colleagues he kept poor records and did not properly pay his bills but did not use his campaign account for personal benefit.

The State: No decisions Tuesday on House Ethics investigation of state representative

<http://www.thestate.com/2013/12/17/3164376/no-decisions-tuesday-on-house.html#storylink=cpy>

Jamie Self

The House Ethics Committee will make no decisions Tuesday in the case of state Rep. Harold Mitchell, D-Spartanburg, who the legislative ethics panel is investigating on possible misuse of campaign money. At the start of the meeting, the committee immediately went into closed session for a legal briefing on the case. After about two hours of deliberation behind closed doors, Rep. Kenny Bingham, R-Lexington and chairman of the Ethics Committee, told media that the committee would take no action in Mitchell's case Tuesday.

Anderson Independent: State mental health director wants more partnerships with hospitals

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/2013/dec/17/state-mental-health-director-wants-more-with/>

Nikie Mayo

South Carolina's mental health director says he wants to focus on partnerships that will help keep people who should be served by his agency from getting stuck in hospital emergency rooms. John Magill, who is responsible for overseeing the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, said he hopes a staff-sharing initiative would help mentally ill patients who walk into an emergency room get the psychiatric care they need sooner. Magill said he thinks staff sharing would work at AnMed Health Medical Center.

Island Packet: SC activist's push for criminal trial dismissed in open-records case

<http://www.islandpacket.com/2013/12/17/2853888/sc-activists-push-for-criminal.html#storylink=cpy>

Jamie Self

An open-government activist says S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson should have criminally prosecuted the director of a state agency for failing to answer a public records request on time. Instead, an attorney with Wilson's office last week dismissed the criminal allegation against Department of Health and Human Services director Tony Keck. Ned Sloan, a retired Greenville construction contractor, accused Keck and the health agency of violating state law by failing to respond on time to Sloan's request for public records related to the hacking of the agency's data.

Anderson Independent: Seneca businessman to step down from DOT commission

<http://www.independentmail.com/news/2013/dec/17/seneca-businessman-to-step-down-from-dot/>

Kirk Brown

Seneca businessman Eddie Adams is stepping down as a member of the South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission. Adams, who served as the commission's chairman in 2012, cited personal reasons for leaving after four years on the panel. "It has been very productive but also very time consuming," he said Tuesday. Adams is the former chairman of the Oconee County Republican Party. He is married to 10th Judicial Circuit Solicitor Chrissy Adams.

Greenville News: Darla Moore School of Business names dean

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312180013>

David Dykes

The University of South Carolina has named a new leader for its Darla Moore School of Business. Peter Brews, a professor of strategy and entrepreneurship at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina and immediate past associate dean of its OneMBA program, will become dean of the Moore School on Jan. 16, USC officials said Tuesday. Brews, 56, a native of South Africa, has more than 25 years of international business education experience, having taught at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business before UNC.

Local News:

Greenville News: Local home sales continue to show positive signs

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312180019>

Angelia Davis

Real estate experts continue to see encouraging signs from a robust market in the Greenville metro area and solid growth around the state. With November's numbers just in, home sales locally continue to run higher than year-ago numbers, with the latest figures showing gains for the first 11 months this year. The number of residential units sold last month — 679 — were 14.1 percent higher than the 595 sold in November 2012. Buyers closed on 721 residences in October 2013.

The State: Accused Schemers Courted Columbia City Council Members

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=EblfiFrq

Clif LeBlanc

Jonathan Pinson and a Florida business associate, both facing federal corruption charges, courted Mayor Steve Benjamin and two others on City Council about more Columbia development projects, according to interviews and documents obtained by The State newspaper. Federal prosecutors have tied only Pinson's Village at River's Edge to their ongoing investigation. But the newspaper's inquiries show that Pinson and admitted kickback payer Richard Zahn of Florida have been much more active in Columbia than had been known publicly.

The Item: New VA policy to help with health care, disability pay

http://www.theitem.com/news/local_news/new-va-policy-to-help-with-health-care-disability-pay/article_ae347391-dd84-53c1-9f64-954513ac0fb9.html

Raytevia Evans

Veterans with traumatic brain injuries who are diagnosed with any of five other ailments will have an easier time receiving health care and disability pay under the Department of Veterans' Affairs' new regulations, possibly aiding some of the 3,600 veterans cared for at the Sumter County Clinic when the new policy takes effect next month. "We decide veterans' disability claims based on the best science available," said Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Eric K. Shinseki in a statement. "As scientific knowledge advances, VA will expand its programs to ensure veterans receive the care and benefits they've earned and deserve."

Greenville News: Repairing septic systems key to cleanup of waters, proponents say

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312180035>

Nathaniel Cary

In the mountains high above Greenville the Saluda River runs clear and cold. But it also runs polluted. Too many nutrients — the product of human and animal waste — flood into the river or its smaller feeder streams. Much of the pollution flows from homes with failed septic tanks, officials say. Rather than seeping into the ground, waste floods into the river when heavy rains fall. The excess nutrients make the water unsafe to drink. Swimming or wading in the water can lead to stomach illnesses, skin infections or ear, nose and throat infections and, rarely, hepatitis A, meningitis or encephalitis, according to DHEC and the EPA.

The Item: Sunday alcohol sales proposal could be up for vote in November

http://www.theitem.com/news/local_news/sunday-alcohol-sales-proposal-could-be-up-for-vote-in/article_d7bfbec7-7913-56a9-aeca-2a2ae8570367.html

Bristow Marchant

The earliest Sumter residents could get a vote on Sunday alcohol sales is November of next year. That was the message to Sumter City Council at its final meeting of the year Tuesday after Mayor Joe McElveen confirmed receipt of a letter from the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce asking for the vote in an election referendum. "What I've learned is that it has to be done in a general election, not a special election, so if we do it, it's not going to be for a while," McElveen said.

National News:

Associated Press: Employer groups oppose pension fees in budget deal

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268798/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=qOSx9grS

Sam Hananel

Employers that still offer workers traditional pension plans are in line for hefty insurance premium increases under the budget agreement struck in Congress, the second time in two years that lawmakers have turned to them to help finance spending deals. The basic annual government-charged premium for pension insurance already was scheduled to rise from \$42 for each covered worker in the private sector to \$49 in 2014. The new budget agreement would raise that premium to \$57 in 2015 and again to \$64 the following year.

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